

# News from Oman & Southern Arabia

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*Sultan Qabus of Oman*

NEWS FROM OMAN & SOUTHERN ARABIA

Edited by: KROAG(The Committee for the Revolution  
in Oman and the Arabian Gulf)

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## INTERVIEW WITH ABDUL AZIZ AL-QADI, CHAIRMAN OF THE PFLO CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*The interview was made by the P.D.R.Y. daily newspaper "14th October" in February 1981. Here reproduced from BBC's Summary of World Broadcast, February 17th 1981:*

Replying to the first question connected with the process of self-construction, Comrade Abdul Aziz al-Qadi said: The task of self-construction has many aspects, or let me say it is a comprehensive task covering all the Front's (Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman) aspects: the political, ideological, organizational and military. However, some aspects are given greater attention than others. This matter is connected with our previous struggle experience and the gaps it exposed. It is also connected with the nature of the future tasks of the revolution in its present stage.

In the second half of 1976 we drew up a programme for internal contacts to deal with all aspects of developing our own conditions (Arabic: shurut dhatiyyah) for the revolution and its vanguard, the Front. This was done by relying on the sound lessons derived from past experience and what it contained in terms of achievements, gaps and pitfalls. Despite the political circumstances resulting from the temporary setback to the armed struggle experience, we have succeeded during the last four years, under the transitional programme, to move quite a long way towards the implementation of the tasks defined in the programme.

I can say openly here that we have succeeded during this period in (?training) a very large number of revolutionary cadres in various fields of specialization such as the organizational one, the political, the military, the ideological, and others. We have achieved a higher level of capabilities in these aspects if measured against the situation in the past. We have achieved palpable success in building a well-founded and cohesive organizational unity for the Front based on clear and mature ideological and political unity.

Parallel with that we have also achieved expansion in our organizational conditions and in our relations with and our political influence on our people in all their various



popular sectors and groups. But more important than all that is the fact that we have been able, on the basis of the programme, and in spite of the acute embarrassment caused by the temporary setback, to preserve the existence of the revolution and the spirit of rebelliousness and sacrifice with which we started in 1965 and to preserve, even under the setback, our guns and the torch of the armed struggle.

The armed operations seen in 1979 and last year, 1980, did not have the same momentum and level as those we saw at the beginning of the seventies. But, especially under the new circumstances, the new stage of the revolution must be considered as possessing very deep and important implications.

The forthcoming PFLO general national congress scheduled to be held during this year, 1981, will consider what has been achieved during the past in the transitional programme for strengthening and the development of our own conditions. The congress will decide the nature of the period to follow.

Another question from "14th October": You have raised the banner of the broad-based national front. What has been the response of other forces to that?

This was the reply by Comrade Abdul Aziz al-Qadi: The construction of militant national unity comprising all the groups, classes and nationalist forces of our people must be considered a central question and a very basic link in the struggle connected with our people's freedom and independence. In the past we have committed mistakes of division and had limitations of view about this question. We now uphold the motto of building a broad-based national unity on the basis of ideological and theoretical views a greater sense of responsibility. We have learned a great deal from our mistakes and studied deeply our experience and the experience of others.

The question of getting rid of foreign domination and bases, the achievement of the full national independence of our country, the struggle for our people's freedom and their democratic demands and the struggle to give Oman its natural position in the Arab family and within the framework of the anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and anti-Camp David Arab struggle - all these questions, or rather essential

demands, concern, in fact, all our Omani people and all Yemeni nationalists, without exception, and that notwithstanding the political and ideological differences with regard to any other questions.

The critical stage through which our homeland is passing, especially under conditions of occupation, bases and foreign hegemony require, of necessity, the building of the most broad-based class and social alliance possible to ensure the triumph of our people's objectives and their just demands.

The policies pursued by the puppet Muscat regime based on complete prostration before the imperialist powers, especially the USA, permitting it to establish military bases in our country and giving it facilities everywhere, as well as the regime's flagrant backing for Camp David and Sadat - these policies, unlimited in their treachery and displaying a continuous disregard of the simplest sovereign rights, contribute greatly to uniting our people's ranks and the strengthening of their national unity in the struggle to achieve complete independence, freedom and democracy.

These flagrant and imbecile policies of the Muscat regime, inasmuch as they necessitate the building of the most broadly-based national unity possible coupled with the channelling of the Omani people's energies, also offer us great assistance in achieving our great goal and make our task of building national and popular unity easier and less complicated.

The achievement of national unity for our people in the national struggle for the building of the broad-based national front will materialize by seeking it simultaneously from two directions: the direction of contacts and dialogue with nationalist groups and organizations as well as nationalist personalities, and the straight path towards all groups and sectors of our people so as to awaken them and (words indistinct). As a matter of practice we move in these two directions at the same time. Contacts and dialogues are continuing with nationalist organizations and personalities to reach a common formula for national action. We are now within the framework of this stage. Contacts and dialogues are continuing. We are fully confident

that we shall attain tangible results.

The forthcoming national general congress of the Front will consider this vital question and the ground covered so far in connection with it. It is expected that the congress will come out with comprehensive ideas on the subject.

Regarding the situation in Oman, Comrade Abdul Aziz al-Qadi said: Muscat's military alliance with the USA is too evident to require much thought or examination. It is a prop and support for the whole Anglo-American imperialist system. Even today British imperialism enjoys political influence and authority in our country and has the last word, not Qabus, (?the puppet). What do we expect from a country ruled by British advisers and commanders?

Relations between the Muscat regime and the USA have been developing very fast for the last two years or so - more precisely since the signing of the Camp David accords, the fall of the Shah and the victory of the Iranian revolution. During that period the Muscat regime, in the words of Qabus himself, was the first to draw public attention to the need for a US military presence in Oman and the Gulf and the need to permit the USA to establish military bases in this region. This same regime took upon itself the duty of thinking about the establishment of a military alliance in the Gulf region, with the USA, Britain and West Germany as members, under the pretext of protecting the Strait of Hormuz. But the scheme was rejected by almost all the states in the region. The nature of the formula on this scheme as presented by the Muscat regime shows it to have been an American formula.

During that same period and until now the Muscat regime has not ceased to reveal through Qabus himself, or his Foreign Minister or his Minister of Information, Muscat's full support for the Camp David accords and Sadat. It is clear that the engineer of the Camp David accords and its protector is the USA.

During the last two years and under orders from American and British circles, the Muscat regime has furthered its relations at all levels with Sadat's regime, - the political, economic, cultural and the military. In this way Qabus has demonstrated his complete disdain for all the Arab summit decisions. Throughout the whole of the past period

the Muscat regime has hosted a number of US military delegations and concluded three arms deals with the USA.

It has also participated with the USA in military exercises held in the Gulf of Oman and the approaches to it. Everyone is aware of these facts or has heard about them.

US troops numbering about 1,500 participated in the search campaigns mounted by the troops of the agent regime in the eastern zone of Dhofar region at the beginning of this year. One of the objectives of the campaigns was to test as well as train the US troops to operate in the geographical conditions of the region. This rapid development of relations with the USA culminated in the signing of a military pact with the USA on 4th June last year under the name of an agreement for economic and military co-operation. Under the agreement the USA was given the right to set up three military bases in Oman, one base on Masirah Island and two bases in the Province of Musandam, which directly overlooks the Strait of Hormuz.

The USA was also given the right to facilities at, and the use of, Omani ports and airports when necessary, including the airports of Sib, Bayt al-Falaj, the naval base in Muscat, Qabus harbour, Raysut harbour, Salalah airport and Tamrayt base. In return for this the USA undertook to pay 100 million dollars per annum to the regime. The USA will also negotiate further sales of arms and provide loans as well as spend about 500 million dollars to improve the military airports and naval bases belonging to the Muscat regime. The USA also pledged to protect the Muscat regime and defend it against any internal or external threats.

What can we call all this? Is this not complete bowing down before US imperialism and that links it and the other parties to the Camp David agreement in a direct military alliance. Information now before us says that the Musandam Province of Oman has been completely transferred, in terms of civil and military administration, to American administration. The USA is also digging a canal in this sensitive area. Its length will be about five kilometres and it will link the Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, at the same time serving as an additional sea route for military purposes even under normal conditions.

At present in US bases in Musandam Province alone there

are about 10,000 US marines of the so-called Rapid Deployment Force.

For the above reasons and on the basis of other facts we can say that the nature of the military alliance between the Muscat regime and US imperialism is no longer concealed from anyone who is really interested in the security and safety of the region and its peoples.

Now, a question from "14th October": How do you assess your relations with USSR and the other socialist countries?

Comrade Abdul Aziz al-Qadi's reply: Our relations with USSR and the other states of the socialist community are quite good. We pay attention to these relations and will seek to strengthen and develop them in the interest of the cause of our people and the causes of our Arab nation as well as the interest of the struggle of the peoples of the world and the triumph of the causes of liberation, democracy, social progress and peace.

Our past experience has shown us that the socialist states, led by the USSR, are genuine friends and allies who can be relied upon in the struggle of our Arab nation against imperialism and Zionism and for the maintenance of national independence and social progress. Our Omani people are part of this Arab nation and their struggle is part of its struggle. The socialist countries support our Omani people's struggle to get rid of foreign bases and hegemony so as to achieve freedom and independence. We value this stand and appreciate it very highly.

On our side we entertain no doubts as to the intentions of the USSR or other socialist countries towards the Arab Gulf region. Rumours circulating in this regard are no more than part of the war waged by imperialist and Zionist circles against the Arab nation and their just causes and against the gains already achieved by the Arab revolutionary movement. The USSR and the rest of the socialist community countries have never attempted to interfere in our internal affairs or impose conditions or policies contrary to our political line or patriotic and national traditions. Our relations are founded on the basis of full and mutual respect.



## PFLO STATEMENT

In November 1980, an official spokesman of the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman made the following statement:

"World imperialism under the leadership of US imperialism is still continuing its extensive military build up in the area of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. The number of military vessels have now reached to more than sixty including three aircraft carriers, destroyers, landing vessels, and mine-sweepers in addition to modern aircrafts of the "AWCS" type which arrived in Saudi Arabia recently. This huge military build up carried out by US imperialism in the area of the Arabian Gulf, and in particular in the territories and waters of Oman, constitutes a dangerous and serious violation of international law and the UN resolutions and threatens directly the peace, stability and security of the peoples of our area and exposes world peace to the danger of a Third World War. the aggressive moves of US imperialism in the Indian Ocean, the Arab Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman and also the establishment of military bases in Egypt, Somalia, Oman and Kenya prove that the ruling circles in Washington constantly try to blast what has been realized at the level of detente and international security. Instead they promote cold war and pushes the world towards the verge of a destructive war.

For a long time the Front has warned the Arab and world public opinion of the seriousness of the traitorous policy being adopted by the puppet Qaboos regime and its full preparedness to implement the aggressive plans of US imperialism in the area by placing the territories of Oman and its waters at the disposal of the US Administration. The following information clearly indicates the national treason committed by the puppet regime in Muscat:

- 1) In January 1975, Qaboos and the former US President Gerald Ford concluded a military agreement on what was called "ensurance of the security and stability of the Sultanate and the Hormuz Strait". The agreement provides:
  - a) that the US undertakes to arm the forces of the Sultan and dispatches military missions for training these forces.
  - b) that the Sultanate hands over the right of using the Oma-

ni Masirah Island to the USA in order to turn the island into a base for the US Seventh Fleet.

2) At the end of 1977 the Muscat regime was the only Arab regime who welcomed and supported the initiatives of the traitorous Sadat.

3) During 1979 and 1980 the Muscat regime implemented the so-called "technical project for protecting the Hormuz Strait" under the supervision of USA, Britain and West Germany.

4) In accordance with an agreement concluded in London between Britain and the puppet Muscat regime the Sultanate in the beginning of 1980 imported a huge quantity of military equipment including fighter bombers and other planes at a value of 300 million \$. Upto now the Sultanate has concluded four arm deals with USA and Britain.

5) On June 5th 1980, a military agreement was concluded between the Sultanate and USA according to which the territories and waters of Oman are to be opened for US forces and their allies.

6) On August 29th 1980, forces of the US Marine Infantry were landed on the Masirah Island, the Um al-Ghanam Island and the Khasb base.

7) In August 1980, a spokesman of the American State Department announced that the US would grant the Sultanate of Oman military and economic aid. At the same time the regime in Muscat informed about the formation of a joint economic committee to undertake encouragement of US capital and companies for increasing their investments in the Sultanate.

In accordance with the military agreement of June 5th 1980, US forces in cooperation with British forces have taken the following measures:

1) The Anglo-American forces stationed on the Um al-Ghanam Island, which overlooks the Hormuz Strait, have opened a canal in the area of "Lima al-Hablain". The canal links the Gulf with the sea of Oman and is to be used in emergency cases or whenever the Hormuz Strait is exposed to danger (according to the allegations of imperialism). The length of the canal is nearly six kilometres.

2) On August 15th 1980, the same forces surveyed the area of

Lima in the Massendum province. The area is estimated at several thousands square metres and is to be used for a military base and stores and depots for weapons.

3) A marine port has been established in the area of "Lima-al-Hablain" to be used as anchorage for the military vessels and patrols operating in the area.

4) Another started project is the construction of a road linking the area of Khasp with the area of "Lima al-Hablain" and nearby areas. From here the road will be linked with the road to the area of Diba and the interior of Oman. The purpose of building this road is to establish a whole network for land transportation in order to save the marine distance in case the Hormuz Strait is exposed to dangers that threatens the interest of imperialism.

5) All citizens and fishermen have been prohibited from approaching the al-Ghanam Island where a huge US marine and air base is being built together with a long-range espionage base. In accordance with this the Massendum province has been converted into a province under complete US administration.

6) The number of forces in the Roos al-Jibal area, the area which overlooks the Hormuz Strait, now has reached to more than 10.000, most of them US soldiers who are stationed on Um al-Ghanam, Khasb and Jibal al-Warah. A number of buildings have also been constructed on al-Warah which overlooks the area of "Sha'am".

Thus, it is clear that US imperialism has the complete political, economical and military control over Oman, and that the Muscat regime has fallen completely into the swamp of treason and has got its fate linked with US imperialism.

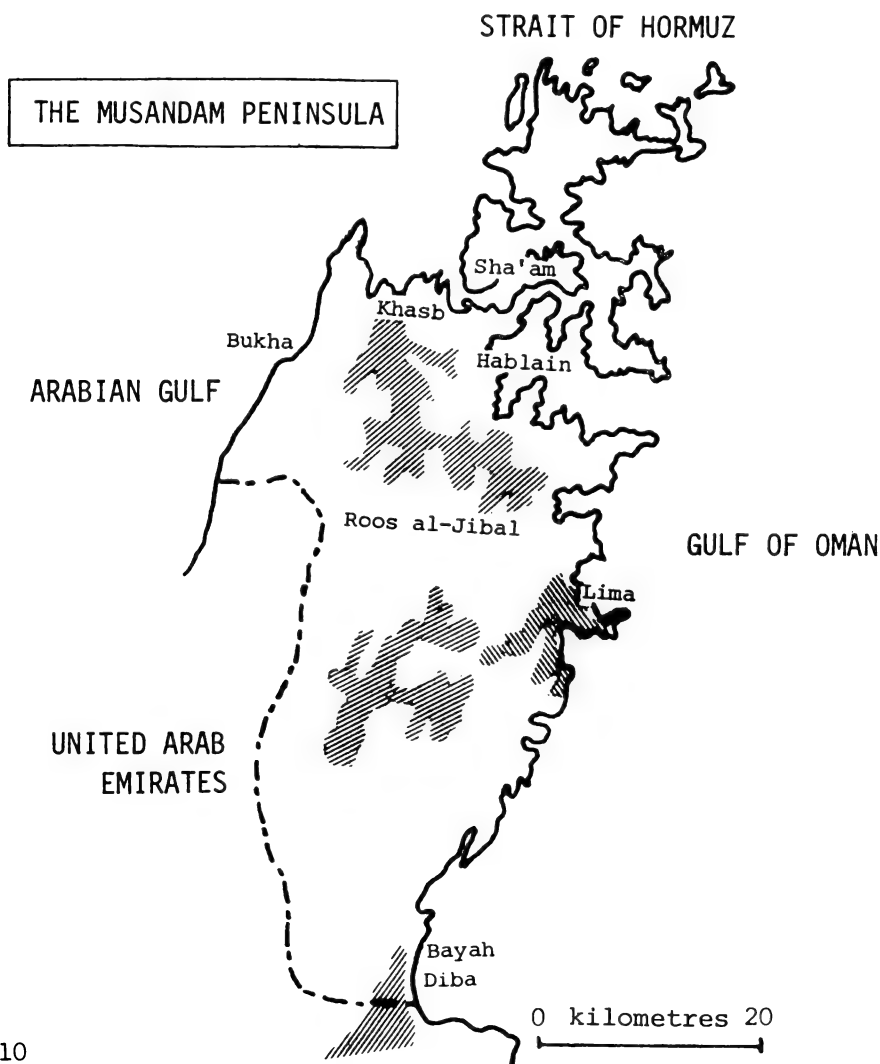
The People's Front for the Liberation of Oman declares to the Arab and world public opinion that it condemns the American occupation of Oman and the criminal imperialist moves and plans in the area, and that it will confront with all combative forms the imperialist military presence in Oman, the presence that threatens the area of the Gulf, threatens the safety of the peoples of the area, and even threatens world peace.

We urge all countries in the area to condemn this presence

and also we urge the Arab national and progressive regimes and in particular the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front and the Arab Peoples' Congress to stand firmly against the aggressive moves of imperialism and to adopt deterring sanctions against the puppet Muscat regime.

We also urge the world public opinion and all progressive and peace-loving forces to raise their voice against the militarism of the adventorous US imperialism and to strengthen their solidarity with the struggle of our people for an Oman free of aggressive bases and imperialist military presence".

(Source: Saut al-Thawra, No 34, November 1980, p. 6-8.)



## THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT CLOSE DOWN THE PFLO OFFICE IN BAGHDAD

An official spokesman of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) has issued a press statement about the Iraqi Government's closure of the Front's office in Baghdad. The PFLO representative has left Baghdad together with the individuals working in the office as well as all the sick persons who were receiving treatment there after being told by the pan-Arab (sic) command of the Ba'th Party in Iraq to leave the country and that the relationship with the PFLO had been severed on the pretext of the Front's non-adoption of a stand supporting Iraq in its war with Iran.

The statement says: The PFLO deplores this stand adopted by the Ba'th Party command in Iraq because such a stand towards the Oman revolution completely contradicts pan-Arab interests and the progressive pan-Arab struggle. It also contradicts the interest of the national liberation struggle in Oman, the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula in that this area and its nationalist and progressive forces are at present exposed to dangerous reactionary imperialist conspiracies which aim at imposing colonialist influence and hegemony and liquidating all the nationalist forces hostile to imperialism, Zionism and reaction in the area. Furthermore, the regime in Oman is moving in a direction that is hostile to the struggle of the Arab nation through its support for all the treasonous steps of the agent regime of Sadat and the Sadat-Zionist-American Camp David accords.

This is in addition to the Qabus agent regime's committing national treasons against the Omani homeland in that it has opened Oman's territories to American forces and bases and exposed the Gulf area and the Arabian Peninsula to the perils of direct military occupation. Oman has now become a marshalling centre and a springboard for American forces and a source for threatening security and stability in the entire area because the American, British and French fleets are deploying in the waters and ports of Oman and the Arabian Gulf and Qabus's regime is welcoming more American forces and bases and allowing Oman's territories to be a theatre for Egyptian-American military exercises. It cannot be denied that joint Egyptian-Israeli-American military exercises are held in Oman because there are numerous indi-



cations of such coordination.

This is one point. The other is the existence of the Oman revolution led by the PFLO which has been leading the struggle of the Omani people for 16 years in order to achieve the true independence of Oman and expel the foreign military forces and bases from Oman so that Oman may contribute positively towards the progressive pan-Arab struggle.

Arising from the new developments taking place in the general Oman, Gulf and Arabian Peninsula area, we consider the action of the Ba'th Party in Iraq to be a contradiction of the national and pan-Arab interest which the Ba'th Party in Iraq calls for. We assure the masses of our Omani people and the masses of the Arab nation and all the Arab and world progressive forces that that action has not come about because of the Front's attitude towards the Iranian-Iraqi war but it is a result of other reasons that are no secret to anybody.

Among the most prominent of these reasons is the difference between the views of the two sides about certain Arab and world issues.

At a time when we deplore the adoption of such an attitude by the Ba'th Party in Iraq, especially in this dangerous situation through which the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula area is passing - and particularly our Omani land where the conflict is intensifying between the Omani people, led by the PFLO on the one hand, and the imperialists and their agent, Qabus, on the other - we would like to record for history our appreciation and our deep thanks to the brotherly Iraqi people and their nationalist and progressive forces for all the backing and support they have offered to the Oman revolution. The strugglers of our Front and our struggling Omani people will not forget all that the brotherly Iraqi people offered to the valiant Oman revolution.

(Source: Aden Voice of Oman Revolution. Reproduced from BBC's Summary of World Broadcast, March 13th 1981).

## INTERVIEW WITH ABDEL SAMAD

Interview with Abdel Samad, member of the Central Executive Committee of the People's Front of the Liberation of Oman, made by The 5th of March, the organ of the Popular Front in Bahrain, June 1980. Reprinted from PFLP Bulletin No.40, July 1980 and No. 41, Aug. 1980.

As you celebrate the 15th anniversary, what is your evaluation of the situation of the PFLO, the directions it is taking and the recent military operations, taking into consideration the current political situation in Oman?

In the period since the beginning of armed struggle on the 9th of June, 1965, the country has passed through difficult and very complicated conditions, namely, the military set-back for the revolution. This affected many of our militants, who became pessimistic and desperate... Many militants within the ranks of the PFLO abandoned the national struggle and some even moved into the ranks of the enemy...

The military defeat of 1975 was due to the intensified aggression of the enemy forces, the British, the Jordanian regime, the decaying Shah regime and the treacherous Qabus regime. Through the mobilization of massive military forces equipped with the most sophisticated weapons, these forces were able to impose upon us the decision to retreat militarily from the western area in Dhofar. This meant a real blow for us, firstly because the western area represented an ideal strategic position against the enemy. It was through the western area at the borders of PDR Yemen that we received all our military and other supplies...

Second, the western area represented a concrete example of the revolution's political authority. Third, the western area represented the hinterland base for the other combat areas, such as the middle and eastern areas.

We must relate these three elements to the conviction

prevailing in our ranks of the battle between us and the enemy as a purely military battle and that it is impossible for any revolution to achieve victory without a hinterland base (a neighboring state for example). This was the conclusion to which we arrived towards the end of 1975 after ten years of incessant bloody war. If we look at all these considerations, it is possible to see the difficulties resulting from the military defeat, as well as the political and psychological effects that spread like wildfire in our ranks.

On the other hand, the military defeat provoked the latent crisis in our ranks, concerning what can be termed the consciousness factor, as specified in the program of the central leadership in 1976. Thus, the conditions of 1975 are not limited to the military defeat and how to confront it, but also meant a re-evaluation of the entire experience of the revolution since its beginning in 1965.

Naturally, this situation facing the revolution was an opportunity seized upon by our enemies to intensify the crisis to the point of deterioration.... the enemy resorted to the following tools:

*First:* The attempt to implant among us the idea that armed struggle is a wrong concept, useless and destructive to our people; that to resort to military means is not a decision of the patriots of the area but due to the instigation of external forces that have an interest in deepening the crisis in the area.

*Second:* The enemy has exaggerated and utilized the mistakes of the PFLO in the past stage of struggle and attempted to show that participation in the revolution means repeating the same mistakes and will only bring losses among the people; that the only outlet for the people is to follow the new regime, the treacherous Qabus regime...

*Third:* The enemy exploited the internal differences that arose within the ranks of the PFLO between 1973 and 1976, attempting to prove to the people that the Front was divided into two lines - one loyal to the homeland and the people and leaning towards relations with the new regime

in Muscat and ending the existing war in the area; and another one which does not even consider the homeland and the people, but gets orders from PDR Yemen and Moscow where its interests lie.

*Fourth:* The enemy utilized the fact that it made a few reforms... to show that it provides 'prosperity and well-being' for the people, while the revolution calls for war and destruction and brings misery to the people.

*Fifth:* The enemy accentuated and utilized the religious and tribal features of the society. Exploiting certain mistakes made by the Front in the past, it attempted to convince the people that the revolution was against their religion, against their tribe... that it ignores all the values and traditions passed on by the people from father to son.

We lived with all these effects daily, especially in 1975-76; under these conditions, we waged an intense struggle with ourselves in facing our subjective problems. We faced a relentless challenge between our principles and political convictions based on the interests of the homeland and the people on the one hand and all the subjective and objective difficulties facing us on the other...

The program presented by the central leadership at the end of 1976 was drawn up on the basis of the historical facts as well as the laws of the historical struggle. The program reaffirmed that severe tempest and hard experiences are the test of the genuine revolution, based on the justice of the cause, the correct political line and practice... The program summarized the tasks of the stage: "Let us struggle to rebuild ourselves, ideologically, politically and militarily and to continue the revolutionary war."

In the context of the central leadership's program, we started implementing its practical steps... giving priority to the following tasks among the other tasks:

- study of the experience of the revolution
- consolidation of our organizational, ideological, political and military condition
- active political work among the masses

From that time until today, we have been able to take positive steps towards the program's implementation. For about

a year, we have been preparing ourselves through intensive discussions in the ranks of the Front to transfer to a new stage in the struggle, which without a doubt carries with it difficult tasks for which we must be ready. I can summarize the basic directions of the stage for the Omani people:

1. The establishment of a broad national front that includes all the forces of the Omani people that agree upon the minimum program to struggle in order to achieve the primary demands of the Omani people at this stage.
2. The basic task of the revolution is to implement the second part of the Front's slogan 'the continuation of the revolutionary war'.
3. To strengthen and consolidate the internal condition of the Front, organizationally, ideologically and militarily.

Based on the present objective conditions and the development of the subjective conditions of the Front, we see the future perspectives for the revolution as immense in light of the following:

1. The instability of the program of the treacherous regime in Muscat and its incapacity to fulfill the basic aspirations of the Omani people, has led to the isolation of the regime and the exposure of its false claims to the people.
2. There is a clearer crystallization of the class conditions of the society and a sharpening of the contradictions between the majority of the popular forces and the few whose wealth increases by exploiting the majority.
3. There is an increase in the imperialist domination of our country - military bases, monopolies, foreign emigration - and its plunder of the greater part of the resources of our people. There is an increase in all forms of repression and terrorism, denying patriots their basic national and democratic rights.
4. The treacherous regime in Muscat has totally and absolutely sided with imperialism, especially the USA; this is antagonistic to all the patriotic and national issues of the Omani masses.
5. It is natural that these factors provide the suitable environment for the spread of the revolution.



What about the recent military operations in Oman?

These military operations are the materialization of the strategic form of the national struggle adopted by the Front's conferences and reaffirmed in the 1976 program of the central leadership. This program placed the military operations as a second priority after the first (the internal rebuilding)... Yet the program also reaffirmed the importance of carrying out military operations from time to time, until the objective and subjective conditions permit that they become the principle form of the daily struggle of the revolution and the masses. Thus, the military operations of the revolution are the actual translation of the line of armed struggle which is still correct and in accordance with the objective and subjective conditions of Oman.

The Arab and international situation is also a factor that influences the increase or decrease of the military operations. We take into consideration the significance of the present political Arab and international situation when deciding upon any military operation. However, we would like to emphasize that the military operations based upon the correctness of the line of armed struggle are not decided by the external political conditions. This is because we are aware that if the line of armed struggle is not linked with the subjective and objective conditions of the place where it is practiced, it will inevitably fail, regardless of how massive it was during a certain period...

The Iranian Revolution elicited an intense theoretical discussion regarding the role of Islam in our era. How does the PFLO view Islam and the militant role it plays against imperialism and reaction, taking into consideration the role that it has played in Oman historically?

The Iranian Revolution dissipated the illusions and dreams of imperialism and reaction in their attempt to utilize the Moslem religion to safeguard their interests, which contradict Islam; this created obstacles for imperialism and reaction in attempting to continue distorting Islam and using it against the Moslem people.

From the beginning, Islam struggled for the rights of the oppressed and the dispossessed; it addressed itself to the

poor so that they would struggle for the victory of Islam, which first and foremost came to save them from repression and enslavement. Islam was never limited to prayer; its real essence is a total social revolution. This is very clear in the Koran, where the real theme is justice, goodness and equality among people.

Since the first era of Islam, there has been a growth of the social forces, an increase in material resources and in the contradictions between the interests of people. The first trends to revise Islam started among some sectors of the merchants, landowners and nobility, due to their material wealth. They realized the real danger they would face from the continuation of Islam in its revolutionary spirit and progressive social essence. Their interests motivated them to ride the wave of Islam, narrowing its concepts and laws, so that it could be utilized to fulfill their own aims and aspirations...

These class forces succeeded in subverting Islam and its teachings to serve their interests; they manipulated the ignorance of some people as to the essence of Islam... Thus, we see that the slogans that have been spread most widely among Moslems are those concerning worship and obedience to Allah and his prophet. These are correct and true to Islam. However, if we look into their essence, we find that in their application by those privileged sectors, obedience to Allah and his prophet means that people have to absolutely obey their rulers, as they are considered to get their inspiration from Allah and his prophet; whereas, obeying Allah and his prophet should mean that the rulers must apply the teachings of Allah and his prophet. But the rulers realize that this would mean what they must live like all other people, materially and spiritually, and fulfill the duties of worship. To avoid this, they submit religion to their particular logic under the slogan of religion itself. Even where the rich and the poor meet in one place to pray, the ruling forces specified that the front places be reserved for them as a sign that differentiates them from all the people.

This is how the process of revision started in Islam.

This revision deepened until it became a total course in its concepts, laws and legislation, as it is now in most of the Arab world... Although Islamic history witnessed many Islamic revolutions with social aims, these were incapable of re-establishing Islam as it was during the prophet's era and the Khalifates. Instead the reactionary repressive forces were capable of placing Islam on its head...

In spite of all this, the conflict continues between genuine Islam which represents the interests of all Moslems, and the falsified Islam led by the reactionary forces ruling in the Islamic world.

In our Omani history, there are great examples as to the role of Islam in the struggle. There are many Imams who led their people in the struggle for justice and equality and against occupiers and despots. The Imam Nasser Bin Murshed Al Ya'rubi who established the Al Ya'arba state at the beginning of the 17th century is an outstanding example. Another example is the role of Imam Al Kharousy in 1913-1920; he was later killed by the British and the rulers of the house of Al Busaid. These two heroic Imams are examples that prove that Islam is a religion of rights, justice and equality, when understood in its humane and progressive essence.

In order that the reader understands how the PFLO sees the role of Islam, we want to summarize the different interpretations of Islam in this age.

*First:* The ruling forces in most of the Islamic world see religious duties only in terms of prayer and obedience, hiding behind the superficial form and using it for their own repressive interests, completely ignoring the real essence of Islam.

*Second:* The Moslem Brotherhood views Islam in a dogmatic, static way, claiming that they want Islam to be practiced as it was when it first emerged. Thus, it gives Islam a reactionary character, ignoring the logic of development which Islam itself takes into consideration. The Koran was written at several different period to solve the problems and issues that arose during these periods. Although some of the Moslem Brothers attempt to use some of the correct things in Islam, in their general line they dis-

tort Islam, motivated by their class interests. Thus they follow the same path as the ruling classes in the Islamic world.

*Third:* is the interpretation of the Arab national liberation movements, as well as the progressive Islamic movements, regardless of whether they are in power or not. Some have acquired a dogmatic view; others have lost a clear view concerning the different interpretations of Islam. The former have shunned Islam, regarding it as a reactionary concept to be confronted. They ignored that Islam has become a material fact among millions of Moslems... Another trend has Unsuccessfully followed a process of selection among the different interpretations. Sometimes they exaggerated the viewpoint of the first trend in their practice. This latter trend will remain lost and negative, if it does not stop wavering and decide upon a clear position concerning Islam. I believe that there is a possibility that this trend might take a correct stand, if they overcome their shortsightedness and take the objective conditions into account, ignoring the reactions of those who sit between four walls theorizing, yet fearful of the smoke of factories and the dust of the fields.

*Fourth* is the Iranian Revolution that was capable of moving millions of Moslems in a massive revolution that overthrew the Shah's dictatorship. Although there are positive signs as to the understanding of Islam, yet there are still some who are manipulating Islam in a way that serves their own interests. Just like some who rode the wave of Islam when it first arose, in revolutionary Iran there are some who are riding the wave so they can assault the revolution and its revolutionary content. However, in order not to pre-surmise the course of events, let us look at what the experience of the Iranian Revolution offers regarding the role of Islam in the revolutionary process.

We in the PFLO have been inflicted by the third interpretation of Islam; yet we have learned a great deal through our own revolutionary experience and are de-

terminated to rid ourselves of its effects. On this basis, we are convinced that Islam is a religion that upholds truth and justice and is capable of playing an immense role in the revolutionary process and in the long obstinate struggle between us and our enemies.

How do you view the four meetings that have taken place between the patriotic forces in the Peninsula and the Gulf?

These meetings between the patriotic forces in the Peninsula and the Gulf are a necessity imposed by the interests of the homeland and the people in this vital area of the world. The conflict over this oil-rich area is increasing. After the Shah's fall, the imperialist forces decided to be self-reliant in protecting their interests and confronting the peoples of this area if they should attempt to threaten imperialism's oil interests. From the imperialist point-of-view, the danger lies in that the oil might be used to the advantage of the people to advance their patriotic and national interests. US imperialism is thus increasing its military presence, especially in Oman, where there are no less than 30 American warships and aircraft carriers.

The extent of the danger facing the area and its peoples can also be felt through the process of plunder of the resources, especially the oil, by the international monopolies and the local collaborators. In addition, there is the policies of repression, terror and the denial of basic national and democratic rights.

All these conspiracies woven against the peoples of the area have local supporters and collaborators. Some collaborators, such as Qabus, overtly offer all kinds of facilities to US imperialism, that has prepared a special force of about 100,000 men to occupy the oil fields, especially those in the Peninsula and the Gulf. This American force has ceased to be something we read about in magazines or newspapers or hear about in announcements of American officials that they are training for desert warfare in Nevada. Today we are seeing this force at the military bases at Masira, Hilala, Mustadem, Jabal Ali, Al Jafir, etc. as well the scores of war vessels in the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. This force ma-



de its first test in the desert of Lout in Iran in the unsuccessful attack on the Iranian Revolution under the pretext of freeing the hostages...

In line with the American plans to occupy the oil fields and subjugate the peoples of the area... the almost concluded negotiations between the US and Qabus will result in a military alliance on the basis of which the Americans will obtain more Omani territory for building their bases.

There are many clear indications of the aggressive American aims against the peoples of this area - the economic war against Iran, the possibilities of a total naval blockade through its military presence in the Omani and Gulf waters, etc... The American threats and military presence is not merely a game...

When the patriotic forces in the Gulf and the Peninsula are able to fully absorb the scope of this danger and consequently take the decision to confront it, then these meeting will be paralleled on the level of responsibility and confrontation. We also believe that the patriotic forces in the Gulf and Peninsula will discover that the depth of the crisis is also connected to the lack of democracy in our area, which facilitates the success of the imperialist schemes, especially those of the USA.

The national and democratic issues are the central points in the national and democratic struggle. Some patriotic forces in the area see their crisis in the absence of democracy; others see it in terms of both the national issue and the question of democracy. However, the issue of democracy in one area must be linked to the crisis in the other parts of the area; for if it is taken in isolation of the total area, the result will be the scattering of the struggles. On this basis, the only correct solution for the patriotic movement in the Gulf is to unite around the central tasks.

This does not mean negating the specific and independent program of each force involved. It is the right and even the duty of each to have its independent specific program defining the path of its struggle, provided that the central joint tasks are also part of the special

tasks of each force.

The national question and the question of democracy are the two main urgent tasks for the masses and their patriotic forces in the area. Through the struggle in each country, according to its specific conditions and linked with the joint struggle in all the area, it will be possible to fulfill these two requirements...

Thus the meetings of the patriotic forces in the Gulf and the Peninsula and the joint statements issued are in themselves a positive phenomenon and must be defended and continued. However, the meetings will remain shallow, and in the overall outcome even more destructive than beneficial, if they are not on a clear basis with genuine desire to wage a joint struggle and offer the necessary sacrifices for the common aims of our people.

On the other hand, in order to achieve the aims for which we struggle, it is necessary in our work to:

1. Acknowledge that as of now we are forces with differences in some political and ideological matters; we must therefore have mutual respect for these different positions. It is thus necessary to have objective discussions with the aim of bringing the different points-of-view closer in order to reach a higher level in the joint work.
2. We must avoid permitting these political and ideological positions to become obstacles hindering the joint work on the central tasks upon which we can agree.
3. We must fight the patronizing mentality that might arise among us or some of us and must deal with each other in the spirit of alliance - criticism - alliance.
4. We must adopt the joint programs with conviction and confidence in implementing them.

The countries in the Gulf and Peninsula area have similarities in their economic and political structures and the nature of the regimes, with the exception of PDR Yemen... they either fall under direct colonization, like Oman, or indirect... These conditions provide the basis for meeting and having joint work to

build a genuine alliance and on a higher level between the patriotic forces, even more than in other areas of the Arab World.

The Gulf area is witnessing a revolutionary upsurge... in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Bahrain... What is your evaluation of these events?

I don't believe these events have reached the level of a revolutionary upsurge. In any case, it differs from one area to another in terms of strength, extent, the motivating force and the aims. The demonstrations, strikes, protests, leaflets, the events in the Mecca mosque and those in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, all reflect the state of unrest among the masses. This is due to the deterioration of the political and economic situation and the absence of democracy.

The Iranian Revolution was a catalyst, escalating the unrest and playing an important role in revolutionizing the masses, especially among the Shiites, by presenting Islamic slogans aimed at solving the problems of the people. If we view the events through the demands raised, we see the Islamic imprint that does not go beyond achieving some reforms that cannot really make revolutionary change in the political and economic life of the area.

Looking from another angle, these events were not the result of joint programs of all the oppositional forces. Moreover, there was a difference in the nature of the demands raised during these events by the different forces... not all the oppositional forces in these areas have grasped the central joint tasks upon which it is possible to be broadly effective and to cause genuine revolutionary upsurge. In the absence of unity between the oppositional forces... it would be easy to split them up and strike them one by one, as well as to suppress these events by offering some reforms in order to passify certain strata of the masses which these forces represent.

We also observe that the masses are divided between these political forces, who are not united around a joint program... whereas they are confronting an enemy which is united around its program... Consequently, how can we picture a revolutionary upsurge, especially at this stage,

when the internal conditions have not yet ripened sufficiently?

I am not underestimating the importance of the recent events in the area; nor do I doubt their revolutionary aspect... On the contrary, they are part of the quantitative revolutionary process which will inevitably lead to a new qualitative change, when the necessary prerequisites are present. At the same time, it is a positive and necessary condition to achieve some gains for the masses within the framework of the continuing struggle... until the total aims are achieved...

To us, it is not a prerequisite that the demands or motives of the masses be 100% correct. The prerequisite for our success is to work among the masses. In this way, it is possible to lead them on the correct path and to correct mistakes in the process of their struggle... It is truly unfortunate that the revolutionary political forces have not yet reached the level in their relations with each other, that would enable them to take the initiative in leading the masses... There is not yet one force able to shoulder the initiative on its own. It is even more unfortunate that secondary contradictions take more time than the major issues...

If we view all the events in Bahrain, we see the great difference between the strength of the mass movement led by the religious opposition and that led by the political opposition. The former has been much stronger and was sometimes violent, while the latter found itself lagging behind the masses and their struggle...

I think that the Islamic trend led by the Islamic opposition is still more capable and more prepared to cause a revolutionary upsurge in the area. The leftist political forces are isolated from this Islamic trend, where the energies of the masses are concentrated. These leftist forces have drowned their revolutionary zeal amidst the student movement, although in theory they are aware that the student movement is not the decisive force in the process of struggle in this area; rather it is only one stream in the mass movement.

Theoretical premises designate the masses as the force which creates history; consequently, the left forces must direct their efforts towards the masses wherever they are to be found - in the factory, the farm, the mosque, the schools, etc. The genuine revolutionaries must not abandon or ignore the work amidst the Islamic trend under the pretext of having theoretical differences with the masses, or else all their theoretical premises will remain suspended in the air, unrelated to the objective reality.

Based on what I have mentioned, all the events witnessed in the area, especially in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the Emirates, are the beginning of a revolutionary upsurge, on the condition that the conscious mature political forces are present, ready to sacrifice and capable of escalating these events with clear vision as to the great aims that the people aspire to achieve.

In Oman, the tribe still remains as a basic social unit... How do you look at the role of the tribe in the revolution? What are your experiences as to how it is possible to mobilize and utilize the role of the tribe in the struggle without falling into tribal conflict?

The tribe is a social phenomenon produced by the historical development; it crystallized to become an integral institution with its own internal laws and regulations and also with its own geographical boundaries, recognized by the society. In other words, the tribe in our country is similar to an autonomous government within the framework of the central state. In some historical periods, the law of the tribe dominates within the tribe more than does the law of the state.

This was the structure of the Omani society with tribes spread throughout with their own respective boundaries and the inhabitants being represented by individuals of the tribe. Moreover, within the framework of one tribe, you sometimes find a smaller or weaker tribe or tribes, protected by the larger tribe. This is the Omani reality; so how is it possible to transform it into a united force working for the com-



mon good?

The national question presented itself to all forces at the beginning of the European colonization of Oman during the 15th and 16th centuries, especially with the Portuguese colonization. This was due to the danger threatening many tribes, while the other tribes more removed from this danger, felt that they would also be threatened. Thus, the common factor that united all the Omani tribes was the danger of colonialism. The important question here is who leads these tribes.

In the Omani history of facing the colonialists, Islam played the major role in uniting the tribes, that looked up to the Imams who represented the religious authority. The feeling of the tribes was to increase the authority of the Imamate from a purely religious authority into a religious-political one. Decisions by this authority applied to all, not only in religious questions, but also in political matters, especially those relating to the defense of the homeland.

Under the banner of Islam and the leadership of the Imamate, the tribes played a major role in confronting the occupiers and defending their homeland, their beliefs and their material interests. The tribe played this national role under the leadership of the Imamate, yet at the same time, the tribe played this role as an integral social unit, headed by the sheikhs. Moreover, the Imamate was forced to deal with the tribe as an institution and not as individuals.

On this basis, the national role of the tribe was an outstanding one... However, this role could be transformed to its opposite, if the state or the Imams leading the alliance of the tribes deviated. Omani history tells us of relentless tribal wars, which followed the joint wars against the colonial occupiers. This was due to the incorrect policies of the central authorities, in the pursuit of material gain or by attempting to impose matters by force without the concensus of the tribes...

Therefore, the matter depends on the experience of the Imamate and its ability to understand the tribes, their interests, psychology and habits, so that it is capable of directing the tribe... and avoiding the return to

tribal wars.

The experience of the June 9th revolution differs to some extent. Before discussing the crux of this matter, we can note some important points:

1. At its inception, the revolution was restricted to the inhabitants of the Dhofar area.
2. Dhofar and the tribes there were almost totally isolated from the rest of Oman.
3. The authority of the Imamate was non-existent in Dhofar, due to the fact that the Imamate represented the Abadhi religious doctrine, while the inhabitants of Dhofar adhere to the Sunni Al Shafi doctrine.

During the 50's, many from Dhofar immigrated to the Gulf area, as did members of all the tribes in Oman... In the Gulf area, where patriots of Dhofar met, the feeling of being aliens drew them together. Due to the effects of the new situation... a feeling of solidarity and unity grew. The spread of the national political movement facilitated this development... Towards the end of the 50's and the beginning of the 60's, large numbers of Dhofari patriots joined political and national organizations; some formed organizations with social and local aims.

In this way, the revolution spread into the tribe through its own members, who belonged to various political, national and local organizations. The role of the individual was to affect the tribal institution. This was contrary to other parts of Oman, where it was the tribal institutions which affected the individuals.

When the Dhofar Liberation Front was established, including individuals belonging to the political, national and local organizations, it directed its members in working among their tribes. When the revolution began on June 9th, 1965, it faced some difficulties in its relations with the tribe. This was partially due to the feeling in the tribe that some of its members were rebelling against it. Moreover, due to the links between some of the members of the tribe and the revolution, the tribe was exposed to dangers from the British authorities and the treacherous regime. The tribe's members were threatened, if they allowed their sons to participate with the 'rebels', as the local

puppet authority termed the revolution. Some were imprisoned because their sons belonged to the revolution.

In spite of this, the revolution was able to overcome these difficulties and to break through the wall encasing the tribe through its own members. This breakthrough can be attributed to three main reasons:

1. The entrance of numbers of tribe members into political organizations before the outbreak of the revolution.
2. Those who were linked to the revolution were respected by the tribe...
3. The tribes in Dhofar were more primitive and thus had less authority over the members, contrary to the situation in other parts of Oman...

This was the doorway; the revolution then spread its thoughts and practices widely within the tribe. Certain factors helped the revolution in winning the loyalty of the tribe members and in transforming its institutions, so that the tribe stood directly with the revolution:

1. The spread of national ideas... which aimed to end the repression and tyranny against the tribe.
2. The resistance of the revolution to the British colonialism and the treacherous regime through armed struggle. The extensive battles waged by the revolution had a great effect in abolishing the belief within the tribe that it is impossible to defeat the British and the regime of Said Bin Taimur.
3. The military victories of the revolution created confidence that the revolution is capable of continuing and of achieving victory.
4. The revolution solved differences among the tribes concerning water, grazing and residence rights, and put an end to the fighting that had dominated among the tribes.
5. The revolution provided medical and educational services to the tribes.
6. Military training camps and political education were opened for the persons desiring to participate in the revolution.
7. The revolution provided modern weaponry to every indi-

vidual in the revolution...

8. The women of the tribe were given the chance to participate in the revolution with the fighters and in the work in the camps of the revolution. They received the active support of the male militants.

9. Schools were opened for the children of the tribe.

10. Centers were established to abolish illiteracy in the military units of the liberation army, in the branches of the people's militia and among the patriots.

The experience of the revolution brought to the surface the immense latent potential of the tribe to wage the national struggle, provided there is correct leadership and the revolution solves their problems and lives their daily life with its ups and downs.

When the revolution spread beyond Dhofar, to cover all of Oman, it confronted a new issue in dealing with the tribe, as an institution and with its individual members, these issues being interrelated. The development that occurred in Oman after 1970, due to the reform programs introduced by the Qabus regime, limited the authority of the tribe, which slowly gave way to the state's centralization and its laws. Yet these weak programs presented by imperialism and the local puppet regime were incapable of destroying the wall of the tribe, because they failed to solve the problems of the society as a whole. Thus, the tribe will remain for a long time... as an institution and as ideas, traditions, etc... and it will remain prepared to play a very important national role.

However, it would be a mistake to look at the situation of the tribe, as it was prior to 1970, as a static condition... The structure of the tribe was subject to some developments. Some of its individuals have acquired interests that coincide with those of the regime and its programs. Economically, some have moved from the circle of the tribe to another position - to being workers, soldiers, clerks, merchants, etc. Also certain luxuries of the capitalist phenomena have penetrated the caves and the pastures of the tribe.

The imperialist forces and the treacherous regime in Muscat have deepened the conflicts among the tribes, manipulating the cracks in its structure through the effects of the re-

forms in the area. Tho this end, they formed tribal military units, called the 'national units', consisting of the individuals of tribes, to confront the revolution which had members of the same tribe within its ranks. In this way, imperialism and its local lackeys instigate the people to fight amongst themselves.

This necessitates that we study the development of the tribe in terms of its interests and its contradictions with other tribes, to enable us to develop the correct means for moving the great national potential found in the tribes. The matter of mobilization... to utilize the role of the tribe in the national struggle... is an urgent one, in order to avoid incorrect mobilization, which can hinder the national role of the tribe and return us to tribal conflicts, drawing us into the trap set by imperialism and the treacherous regime in Muscat.

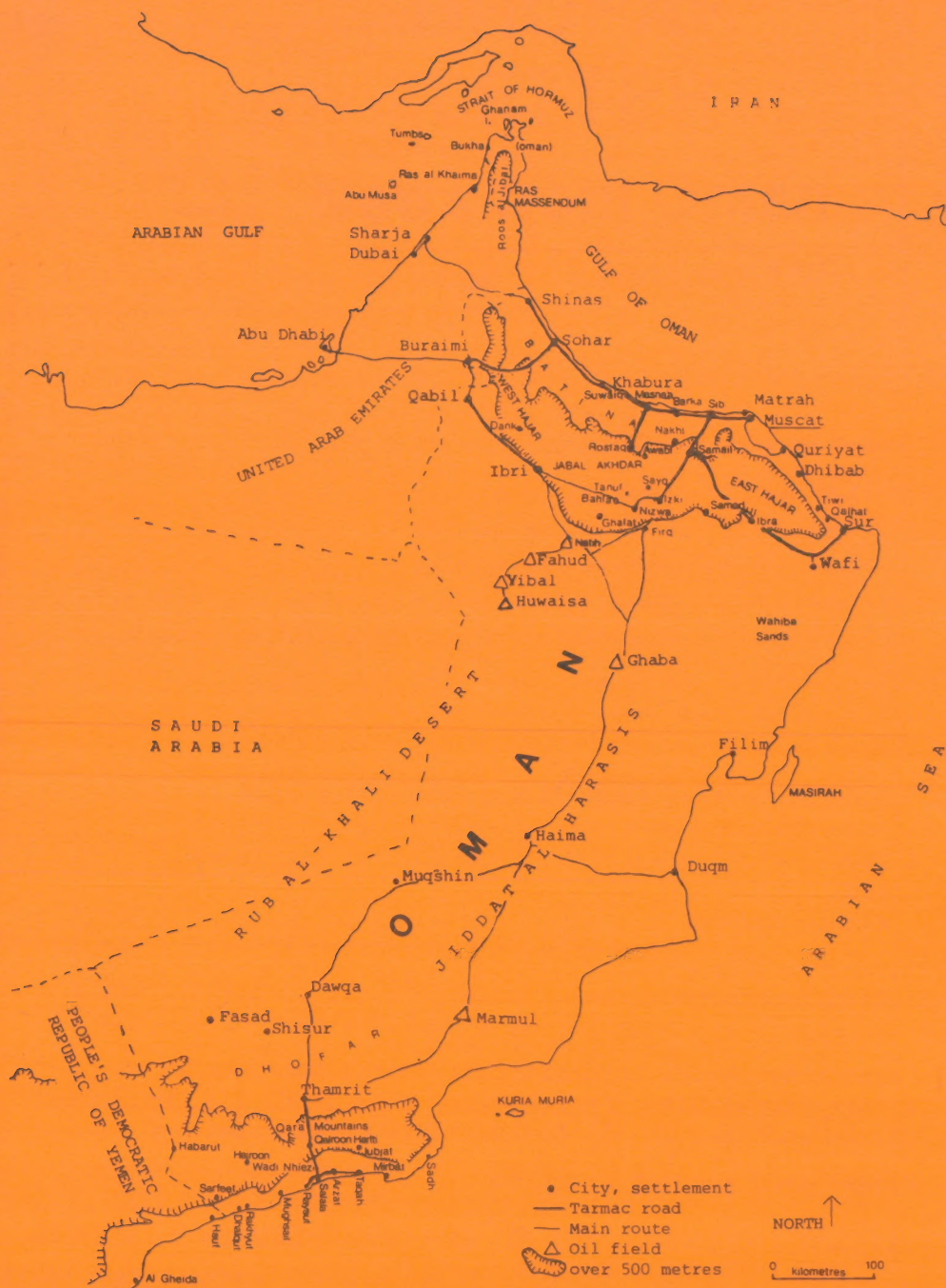
## CONFERENCE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE MASSES IN THE GULF

Under the slogan: "Solidarity with the National Liberation Movements and the Masses of the Gulf Region in Their Struggle Against Imperialism" an international conference was held in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, from October 28-30 1980. Delegations from more than sixty countries participated in the conference to which all patriotic forces in the Arab world were invited. The conference was arranged by the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) and the Arab Peoples' Conference.

The conference was turned against the massive US military build-up in the Gulf area which has increased the pressure on the national and progressive forces. App. 20 papers and studies were submitted to the conference covering subjects such as the aggressive policy of imperialism in the Gulf, the violation of democratic rights, and the socio-economic conditions in the area. Several of the studies were presented by the local liberation movements.

The conference agreed on a common programme of action to consolidate the unity of the anti-imperialist forces in the area and to enlarge the solidarity with the revolutionary movements in the Gulf on all levels.

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Saut al-Thawra, No 34, November 1980, p. 5)





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